

*Consciousness to his Sincerity, the  
22 Christian's rejoicing.*

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A  
Funeral SERMON,

Occasioned by the

D E A T H

Of the late Reverend

Mr. THOMAS REYNOLDS;

Who departed this Life *Aug. 25. 1727.*

Preach'd at the

King's WEIGH-HOUSE in EASTCHEAP,  
*September 10.*

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By JAMES WOOD.

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*Publish'd at the Request of the Hearers.*

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L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN CLARK and RICHARD HETT, at the Bible  
and Crown in the Poultry, near Cheapside. 1727. Price 6d.

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Confession to his Sincerity, the  
Christian's rejoicing.

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# DEDICATION

*To the Congregation at the King's Weigh-  
house, lately under the Pastoral Care  
of the Reverend Mr. THOMAS  
REYNOLDS.*

Especially those who have desired this  
Publication.

*Much esteemed Friends,*

**T**HE kind acceptance which the  
following plain discourse met  
with when I deliver'd it, is a-  
mong the many proofs you have given  
me of your *candour*; which has been  
no small encouragement to me in my  
ministrations among you: Upon your  
demanding it for the press, I resign'd  
it to your disposal, as I had compos'd  
it with a particular view to your service.

Such as it is, to whom then could I  
more properly inscribe it? It is to be

## *The Dedication.*

hoped that neither you, nor I, shall think of the sad *occasion*, without being duly *humbled under God's mighty hand*; and laying to our hearts the late awful dispensation of his providence. You have lost a zealous, useful, skilful, laborious, faithful *minister*; one by whom God has done great things for you: He *rests from his labours, has finished his course*, is now *eating bread in the kingdom of heaven*: and you are as *sheep without a shepherd*. By that stroke have I been bereaved of a most tender and steady *friend*. Yes, the common cause of Christianity among us, has lost an *advocate*, in *this evil day*; one not only *apt to teach*, but able to *convince gainsayers*. If when so many *burning and shining lights* are put out, one after another, God is not acknowledged, if we refuse to hearken to the voice of his rod, this should be reckoned among the worst tokens that can be upon us: it is a sign that he is about to remove,  
and

## *The Dedication.*

*and woe to us when God departs from us!*

*I hope better things of you, tho' I thus speak: those who are the best disposed, do need to be stirred up by way of remembrance. Do not sorrow like men without hope; tho' the vessels of the sanctuary be broken to pieces, yet God lives, and his word endureth for ever. He will take care of his Church, who has bought it with his own blood; to provide for it pastors after his own heart: and she cannot be in better hands. If you would honour God who smites, and regularly express your respect to the memory of the deceas'd, live the doctrines he preached; imitate what was so praise-worthy in his example: let heaven be more frequently in your thoughts, and the views you take of it more entertaining, as you shall meet with such desirable company there.*

*That God would make up the late breach upon you, by granting a more abundant supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ to him who shall succeed in the*  
pastoral

## The Dedication.

pastoral office here; that he would please to preserve that union and harmony, which for many years have been your glory and strength; that he would inspire you with double zeal for his cause and truths; and with an answerable concern about that *holiness in all manner of conversation*, which reflects so much honour on the christian name; that he would more than ever prosper the remaining services, of the most unworthy of all Christ's ministers still spar'd to you; that we may strengthen one another's hearts and hands in the good ways of God, and meet in that blessed world, where *the spirits of just men are perfect*, and so fitted both for its work and its rewards: These are, and shall be the hearty prayers of,

*My dear friends,*

*your most respectful,*

*and obliged servant,*



Greys-Inn-Lane,  
Sept. 16. 1727.

JAMES WOOD.

## 2 COR. 1. 12.

*For our rejoicing is this, the testimony  
of our conscience, that in simplicity,  
and godly sincerity, not with fleshly  
wisdom; but by the grace of God,  
we have had our conversation in the  
world, and more abundantly to you  
wards.*

**I** Appear in this place, on this mournful  
occasion, to gratify the dying request of  
your late reverend and faithful pastor,  
with whom I have serv'd in the gospel for  
some years, as a son with his father. Had  
mine objections been admitted, had I been  
allowed to follow mine own inclinations,  
another would have had this province more  
equal to it; tho' it could have fal'n to none  
who more highly esteemed him living, none  
to whom his memory is more precious.

The subject is of his own choosing; he so-  
lemnly declared in view of eternity, that  
these

these words were a just description of his *walk*; and he had many witnesses that they as truly represented his *experience*: the friendly testimonies of his own breast, supported him under the ungrateful usage he met with from the world; and in the last extremity there was no abatement of his *confidence*. As he *beld fast his integrity* to the death, so he went in the quiet possession of that *peace which is the fruit of righteousness*, out of this world, into the better one, where *the joys are full, and the pleasures everlasting*.

Let us enquire, how this passage stands connected with the context.

It is granted that *Paul* was the *author* of this epistle, by the blessing of God upon his ministry at *Corinth*, (a city infamous to a proverb for the most detestable vices) there was a church form'd; one of considerable note and figure. Some time after his departure thence, he wrote his *first* epistle, to *water what he had planted*, and rectify several *disorders*, which had got footing among them during his absence. He had drop'd some hints in it, of his designing to visit them in *person*; but being detained longer than he expected in *Macedonia*, he sends them a *second* letter. Among other reasons inducing him to it this was one, *viz.* there was sprung up a set of men, who bent their *tongues like their bows for lies*, but were  
I
not

not valiant for the truth upon the earth; these mean spirited creatures agreed to defame the apostle, to lessen his interest among the people, and in consequence his capacity for service. They made an *handle* of his not having kept his *appointment* with his old friends at *Corinth*: insinuating as if he were little to be regarded, who had made so light a matter of his *word*. This was one, tho' not the only head of *scandal* on which they dwelt. *Paul* knowing the case, defends his character; assures the *Corinthians* that his stay was from *necessity*, not of *choice*; that it was occasion'd by the multiplicity of his *sufferings* for the sake of the gospel, and not as had been suggested, the effect of *irresolution* or *levity* of mind.

He claims a remembrance in their prayers; tells them they needed not to be shy in recommending him to God, since he who knew every heart, knew his *integrity*; that he continued to be the same *plain, upright* man since he had left them, which they in their consciences judg'd him to be, while he was among them. He is not afraid peremptorily to assert, that this fill'd him with *joy* under all the *misconstructions* of an ill-natur'd world.

Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation

*in the world, and more abundantly to you  
wards.*

We shall keep within the apostle's design in these words, if we closely pursue the following propositions.

- I. All who profess to be Christians, such especially who bear the character of the ministers of Christ, should be persons eminent for *simplicity, and godly sincerity.*
- II. This *simplicity, and sincerity*, must run through every part of life; mingle with all our actions, and managements in it.
- III. Our being thus *principled*, or our having this bent of mind, is properly within the cognizance of *conscience.*
- IV. Conscience rightly inform'd, reporting this to be our true character, we should look upon it as an evidence of the *grace of God* in us; and improve it as a reason for our abundant *re-joicing.*

When we have distinctly considered these heads, in a doctrinal way, you will be prepared for the design'd application, and practical improvement of them.

- I. All who call themselves *Christians*, especially such who are dignify'd with the title of Christ's *ministers*, should be persons  
eminent

eminent for *simplicity, and godly sincerity*. Israelites indeed, in whom there is no known allowed guile.

Whoever nameth the name of Christ, is charg'd to depart from iniquity of every sort: and *dissimulation* in our carriage, either to God, or men, is not to be reckoned among the least of sins. As far as this is indulged, we walk contrary to him who is the God of *truth*: cannot be said to imitate Christ's *example*, or tread in his steps, of whom it was prophesy'd, that he should do no violence, neither should any deceit be found in his mouth.<sup>a</sup>

The higher the *post* we hold in his house, the more distinguish'd the *engagements* we are under to him, the more should we shine in every instance, whereby glory may be brought to God; and without arrogating too much, we may say, that his *embassadors*, and such who are the *stewards of his manifold grace*, are at least under special *obligations* to him: they should therefore of all men, be tender that no dishonour be reflected on the name, or cause, of the Lord whom they serve, on their account; and you will acknowledge, that both do suffer, when there is ground for observing of a *minister* that he is a man of *artifice* and *design*; one not in reality what he would have men take him to be. This

<sup>a</sup> Isai. liii. 9.

will stumble good men, and be the means of confirming bad ones in their impiety.

Pity it is, that there should be any whom this charge might reach, without *bringing against them a railing accusation!* any whom *fleshy wisdom* influences, while they would appear to be actuated by *the powers of the world to come*: all such, by whatever party names they are distinguished, do disservice to religion, which cannot sufficiently be lamented.

A mind molded and form'd as the great apostle *Paul's*, is a rare thing, in a *world which lies in wickedness*. Our Lord spoke of *Nathaniel* with a sort of *glorying*, to shew us that *truth in the inner parts*, was a sight most *pleasing* to him: and he *recommended* him as an instance of generous integrity, which was not to be met with every day. *Behold an Israelite, &c.* The scriptures mean the same thing with this *simplicity*, and *sincerity*, by *uprightness*: and as if this term did convey the most raised and honourable Idea, which the mind could receive of human nature in its present state, *uprightness*, and *perfection*, are used promiscuously, as words of the same import. <sup>b</sup>

We may take a more distinct view of this excellent, and laudible temper which the text mentions, under these two particulars.

<sup>b</sup> Job i. 1. Job ii. 3.

1<sup>st</sup>, He who has the *simplicity* and *sincerity* refer'd to, is one whose heart is right with God, in the matters which lie more immediately between him and the soul. He must, in consequence, be not only reformed, but renewed in the spirit of his mind; one out of whom, the heart of stone is taken, and to whom God has given an heart of flesh. One whose governing motives in duty, are a sacred regard to the divine Authority, and a believing respect to the recompence of reward. This sufficiently distinguishes this character from the new model'd notion of *sincerity*; to which nothing of God's special grace is required; for a sincere *Mahometan* stands upon as good a foot, in reference to acceptance with God, as the most sincere *Christian*, if our modern divinity may be depended upon, in an article of this moment and importance. But this is not the only instance, in which under the pretext of free enquiry, and new light, a run has been made upon our common faith. He must have a new nature, who is upright before God (or in his sight) in matters purely religious; one passed from death to life: such good fruit is never seen, to grow on a corrupt tree.

I design no more than a general account under this head. Therefore,

2<sup>dly</sup>, He to whom the character in the text is applicable, is one between the sentiments

timents of whose mind, and the language of his lips, there is the strictest agreement, in what he has to do *with the world*.

One *whom the grace of God which brings salvation, has taught* better, than to approve the low arts, and mean cunning, which influence baser minds; and would abhor the practice, could he most successfully deceive. He is an open man, fair, and undisguised; and tho' to maintain this character, he is not obliged to tell every one who asks, the secrets of his heart, (for *prudence* is consistent with the most severe *sincerity*) yet believing he should use *words* as a description of his *thoughts*, he dares not *say* one thing, while he *intends* another.

This is a fault so modish, a strain so ordinarily expected, that many with whom we converse, would believe themselves ill used if we did not speak of them, and carry to them, beyond what is to be done by the strict rules of *godly sincerity*.

The text mentions the *simplicity and sincerity of God*; because the temper here described is what God *requires*; what he *produces*; what he highly *commends*; and what he has promised here, and hereafter to *reward*.

It is *godly sincerity* (or the sincerity of God) as those who excel in it have here-

ε' Απλότητι καὶ εὐληκενιᾷ Θεοῦ.

in

in an evidence, of *their being born from above, and born of God.*

II<sup>d</sup> Proposition, This simplicity and sincerity, must run thro' *every* part of life, mingle with *all* our actions, and management in it. This has been hinted in a more *general* way, we will now give this thought a more *particular* discussion.

The apostle would have had slender grounds of rejoicing, if this or that particular only, in *civil*, or *religious*, in more *private*, or *social* life, did appear upon reflection, to have been done in *integrity*; while ten thousand more were the instances, for which his *heart might condemn him, as a double minded man*: it was his sincerity's prevailing thro' the whole course of his *conversation*, in every *change* and *condition* of life, at all *times*, in all *company*, whether he had to do with *God*, or *men*, that fed his mind with a lively pleasure, under his outward sufferings.

As a *minister*, he told the *Corinthians*, that he *renounced the hidden things of dishonesty*, and as he *walked not in craftiness*, neither did he handle the word of God *deceitfully*; but by *manifestation of the truth*, commended himself to every man's conscience.<sup>d</sup> And how much to their credit was the appeal he lodged, with those at *Thessalonica*?

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 2.

When

When of himself and fellow labourers, *Stilas*, and *Timotheus*, he says our exhortations were not in deceit, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we spake, not as pleasing man, but God who tries our hearts: neither at any time used we flattering words as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, as God can witness: nor sought we glory of men.<sup>e</sup>

They consulted not with flesh and blood; did not carry on the cause they undertook with carnal weapons, square their conduct, by the maxims of this world's policy: tho' with concern he lets them know, there were some who passed for Christ's ministers, of whom this was not true. *We are not as many* (says he) *who corrupt the word of God* (who making a trade of their ministry, will frame their sermons to the taste of their auditory, however vitiated; if we thus pleased men, we could not be the servants of Christ) but we acted sincerely, for in the sight of God, spake we in Christ.<sup>f</sup> q. d. We preached as those who were accountable at an higher bar than yours; and were principally careful that things might issue well, in the awful discriminating day.

Godly ministers may be brought under a necessity of enlarging in their own commendation, beyond what they would choofe. This force is sometimes laid upon them by

<sup>e</sup> 1 Theff. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 17.

the slanders of licentious tongues: when that is the case, it is not only *lawful* to do this, but it is matter of *duty*. *Reputation* is the next dear thing to *life*. I mention this, lest one so remarkable for *modesty* and *humility*, as it is certain the apostle *Paul* was, should for these speeches of his, be rashly censured, as one too *full of himself*.

You see, that his uprightness, and truth, did not leave him when he came to converse with the world: he was not one thing in the pulpit, and another out of it. He elsewhere assures us, *that herein he exercised himself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men*. This was what he study'd, and what he endeavoured to be found practising every day of his life.

He, who when an open confession of Christ, would bring along with it temporal inconveniencies, declines such an hazardous service; he who baulks this or t'other scripture doctrine, with a worldly view; he who suffers such, for whom he is more directly concerned, to go on in dangerous *errors*, as tho' unobserved, when he is appriz'd of the case; he who will *suffer sin* upon his best friend, lest he should account him *an enemy for telling him the truth*: In short, he who is not faithful, to the best of his

§ Acts xxiv. 16.

light, in every part of the *ministry*, which he has received from the Lord Jesus: that man, however high he may stand in the esteem of the world, cannot on good grounds bring *godly sincerity* within his character.

He who is not in his *family*, in his *closet*, in all his transactions with the *world* as well as the *church*, one who conducts himself as in God's sight, is but a *whited sepulchre*; beautiful to the eye, while there is nothing but *rottenness within*.

So much for the second proposition. We proceed to the

III<sup>d</sup>. It was this, *viz.* our being thus principled, as I have described (our having this disposition, and bent of mind) is properly within the cognizance of our own consciences. This *Apostle* observes in his Epistle to the *Romans*<sup>h</sup>, that the unenlightened Heathens, had naturally a conviction of God's sovereign *empire*, and that reasonable creatures owed him *obedience*: that the *law* written on their hearts, shew'd them in general the difference between moral good and evil; so that they did either approve or censure themselves, as upon reflection it appeared, that they had conformed to, or deviated from, this rule, and standard of practice.

<sup>h</sup> Rom. ii. 15. — *Hic murus abeneus esto,*

*Nil conscire sibi.* — Hor.

— *Quos diri conscia facti*

*Mens habet attonitos, & furdo verberare cædit.* Juv. Sat. 13.

His

His words are these, *the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law: these having not a law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while either accusing, or else excusing, one another.*

It is true, that the grace of God makes us *new creatures*; and that upon our being in *Christ Jesus*, *old things are passed away*: but this does not suppose, that the natural power of conscience is weaken'd, any more than that we cease to be *men*, upon our being *Christians*.

The clearer the light we enjoy, we may proceed with more exactness, and certainty, in judging ourselves; and the difference is as considerable between the light of *nature*, and that of *revelation*, as between the earliest dawn, and the *perfect day*. God's people have in every age rejoyc'd in a consciousness to their own integrity; which proves, that upon enquiry they knew how their affairs stood, *God-ward*: and we should never have it urged as *duty*, to *examine and prove*, in order to our *knowing our selves*, if upon the most diligent search, the thing was not possible. *The heart is deceitful*, and may bring in a false verdict; but in such a question as this, whether the *principles* upon which I act, in what I have

to do with God or men, are *sound or insincere, honest or hypocritical*, the answer is within our own power, the bent of our minds being within our own view: especially remembring, that as to the man truly good this will hold, he has not only a sure rule, but an infallible *guide*; one a part of whose office it is to *bear witness with his spirit*; to direct conscience to form a just judgment, and then confirm its sentence.

*Paul* professes in the text, that he spoke his heart, deliver'd the deliberate sense of an impartial and unprejudiced conscience, when he asserted of his general conversation, and of his conduct to the *Corinthian* church in particular, that it had *been in simplicity, and godly sincerity*.

This leads on to the

IV<sup>th</sup> and last proposition; that when conscience rightly informed, reports this to be our true character, we should look upon it as an evidence of the *grace of God*, and improve it to our abundant *rejoicing* in him. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*

A man may be *honest*, in the common use of the word; act up to the ordinary rules of equity, and justice, as these things are commonly conceived of, hate every thing

thing like deceit, from a natural nobleness of mind: it is a pity, that any who get thus far, should advance no higher, much more being requir'd to prove them gracious. *Godly sincerity*, (which we need not consider as a particular *virtue*, but as signifying the *truth*, which attends all we have to do, with God, or men) is another thing than this *honesty* referr'd to: he, through the whole of whose conversation there runs a vein of *godly sincerity*, must himself be a *godly person*; one over whom God has spread his skirt, into whose heart he has put his fear; one who is under the conduct of the *spirit of truth*, who leads into all truth; and who in the world, have such cause to be glad, and rejoice in God, to say continually, let the Lord be magnified?

Consciousness of sincerity, should rejoice the *living* saint with present comfort; and the dying one, with the hopes of future happiness.

1<sup>st</sup>, Conscience's bearing witness to his *sincerity*, should *rejoyce* the good man, the faithful minister *living*.

Under the *asperisions* and *calumnies* of the world. These have been the common lot of the *righteous* among others of their *many troubles*. The more useful any have been, they have had them in greater *variety*; and less *eligible* for *kind*. Christ, and

*Olim hæc meminisse juvabit.*

gold

his

his apostles were the subjects of many a bitter invective: *they called the master of the house Belzebub, this deceiver*; and represented his followers as men *not worthy to live*. Satan rages most against the boldest assailants of his kingdom: and as far as the *spirits or tongues* of men are within reach of his power, who is *God of this world*, he will employ both to distress them. But what if such a part of my behaviour be condemned as *guileful management*? another made an evidence of my want of *charity*? what, if I am called a *worldly man*, for this? or for that, a man of a *persecuting spirit*? add to this, all the reproaches which the mind of man can invent: what is there in all this, while *conscience* disclaims the accusation, and bears witness to my *sincerity*? that *man sees not, as God does*, and his rash sentence is wholly the effect of his not knowing me better? *Paul* reckon'd it a *small thing to be judg'd of man's judgment*<sup>k</sup>, yet *his tender mercies* are many times *cruel*: and we read of those, who *rejoyced in that they were counted worthy to suffer shame, for Christ's name*<sup>l</sup>. *Their hearts did not condemn them*, tho' the world did: they *did not suffer for evil doing*, this they knew; and it bore up their spirits, that these were to them but *light afflictions*,

<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 3.

1 Acts. v. 41.

which

which would otherwise have been *grievous for the present*.

As to pains, sicknesses, or whatever other outward trouble you can suppose to attend our present state of being, this testimony of conscience is a salve for every sore. Well (says the Christian) I am wearing out daily; but what are these pains, compared with a *wounded spirit*? blessed be God, tho' there are *fightings without*, yet I have peace within; that which is a *continual feast*, in poverty; a friend that stands by me, should I be deserted by the whole world.

2dly, *Dying*, these reports from an enlightened renewed conscience should rejoyce us with the hopes of future approaching glory.

I do not mean, that our triumphs should be built upon a consciousness to our own integrity, as if that were our justifying righteousness before God: this would be *to glory in the flesh*. No man has a right to heaven, who has not to present to God, *the judge of all*, a righteousness which is proportioned to the demands of his law; the most that we can pretend to is *sincerity*; and besides that this is not of our *own growth*, it is *defective*, and so *unavailable* if urged as the foundation of our claim: Christ has wrought out such a righteousness, and none but he could; he *imputes* this too, that it may be *pleaded* by his people;

ple; they quieting all other arguments, make mention of this, and have the *saints* inheritance in virtue of it.

But though our *sincerity* is not to be re-  
*joyced* in, as our justifying righteousness,  
 (which is putting it in Christ's stead) yet as  
 it is an evidence of our being those whom  
 he has from eternity chosen, in time effec-  
 tually called, justify'd, adopted, begun to  
 sanctify, and whom he has allowed to look  
 for eternal life as his gift, it should fill  
 the heirs of the promise with strong conso-  
 lation.

It is appointed to all men once to die; the grave is the place designed for all the living: and while we see the hand-writing on the wall, feel that both flesh and heart are failing us by degrees, how will it quiet our fears, and keep our comforts alive, when all beside is dying, to be able with good Hezekiah thus to reason with the Father of our spirits? I beseech thee now, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee, with a perfect (or sincere) heart, and have done what is good in thy sight<sup>m</sup>. q. d. Thou Lord hast told me, that joy is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. I have reaped the first fruits, now manifest thy self to me as thou dost not to the world, that my comforts

<sup>m</sup> 2 Kings xx. 3.

may abound in proportion, the nearer I am to the harvest. Make good thy word to thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to trust, for all my hope is in thee: thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; that my heart has been sound in thy statutes; and my first care to be approved with him, who sees in secret, and does openly reward: if integrity be a characteristick of those, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to bestow the kingdom, I dare to say, that many as mine imperfections have been, thou hast given me the grace of sincerity: when I look back on past life, let this thought encourage me, and give a fresh flow to my pleasures, when by faith, I do enter within the veil.

It was not peculiar to this good man, at evening-time to have such light. God has often reserved the best blessings for the last; and filled those with joys in their dying moments, that have been unspeakable and full of glory, who for the largest part of life were under a cloud. He is a Sovereign, acts as such; 'tis therefore rather an instance of special favour, than of justice, thus to carry us to heaven as it were in his bosom: however, if we mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, generally speaking, his latter end is peace; and comfort in dying what such experience, who have sincerely endeavour'd while they liv'd, to live

to the Lord. They have triumphed over death, as a vanquished enemy; and gone off praising God for the victory given them thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.

It now remains that we shut up this discourse, with a suitable application.

1st, You may see from what has been said, what mistaken notions the world usually entertains of real religion. It is judged to be a *mopish melancholy* thing, an enemy to all true joy; whereas wisdom's ways are pleasantness, such have peace who love God's law, while there is no peace to the wicked. These men call darkness light, and light darkness, so does the God of this world blind them. Indeed, religion does not countenance the frothy mirth, which is the laughter of a fool; yet it furnishes out much more refined joys, than this world can give: all such can set their seals to this, who have been favour'd with the testimony of a good conscience: and they have a right to be heard on this head, who speak by experience. The devil was a liar, as well as murderer from the beginning, yet men will believe him, against the God of truth; fall in with his evil reports of the good ways of God, tho' at the peril of their souls. May he who convinces of sin, shew these their delusion: the case is the more moving, as it is common. How sad, to give place to the devil, as to cherish thoughts

thoughts most dishonourable to our Maker, and ruinous to our selves!

2dly, We learn from this doctrine, that many do *rejoyce*, whom God calls to *lament*. O the number of *formal professors*, who take the shadow for the substance! And while strangers to the *simplicity*, and *sincerity*, which are of God (the fruits of regeneration, and evidences of adoption) and too much conducted in every part of life, by *fleshly wisdom*, do yet cry *peace*, tho' there is no peace! their profession is a snare to them; their hearing, and praying (in both which those may abound, who are utter strangers to religion) strengthen the mistake; for 'tis natural to believe well of our selves: thus they *hope against hope*, and make themselves cheerful in such a condition, as would fill them with terror, were it open to the view of an awakened mind.

It's good to be *jealous over our selves with a godly jealousy*, lest we should think we are *something*, when we are *nothing*, and in an affair of the highest consequence, *deceive our selves*. Do some go on pleasantly, who have no right to peace? it becomes us then, frequently to put this challenge to conscience, what if I should be one of those who go on *with a lie in their right hand*? and high as my character is, *lively as my hopes*, should prove a *cast away*? there cannot be solid joy, when

upon such enquiries, there is not the favourable *answer of a good conscience.*

3dly, This doctrine as it warrants, so it should *excite*, and *enlarge* the joy, of every *sincerely* godly man. Many rejoice, who have no right to joy, and there are some who ought to be comforted, and yet go joyless. If you truly fear God, the more you know your selves, you will see the more, your need of *humility*; but you will likewise see more clearly, the reasonableness of your *rejoicing* with this *trembling*. I observ'd, that conscience does not condemn every man, whom God will condemn, (its applause often arises from the *ignorance* and *partiality* which still prevail in us) but when upon an appeal to its judgment as an enlighten'd conscience, it testifies to the *uprightness* of our walk with God, and men; that we desire and endeavour, to think and act in every capacity, and relation, as in the sight of God, this is a *ground* of joy, and a fit *motive*, and *reason* for our abounding in it. God expects of such, that they should *rejoice evermore*: in *the fire and the water*, when troubles are multiply'd; in all the vicissitudes of this inconstant changing state, living and dying. That they should go out of this world, up to heaven, with the *voice of joy and thanksgiving*: there, they shall be fully and for ever, practised in both.

4thly,

4thly, How miserable are their circumstances, who instead of making conscience their friend, by an *upright walk before God in all his ordinances and commandments*, are daily offering violence and outrage to it! This is the case with the generality: *Christ's flock, such as are wise to salvation, who choose the good part, that shall never be taken from them*, are but an *handful*, compared with the gross of human kind. Among the most, *iniquity does abound*; the peace with which they please themselves, is properly call'd a *false one*; for it subsists upon their ignorance, and perishes upon the first close and serious reflection. Are not the maxims of this world, those by which most men form their managements? do not the most *seek their own things*? shift, and vere to take the advantage of every favourable gale? are there not men vile enough, to prostitute even *religion*, (that sacred thing) to their secular interests? let them prosper as they desire, we need not *envy their prosperity*, who have a *worm* at the bottom of every delightful goard, to eat away what is comfortable in it; we are less tempted to it when we think of *their latter end*. *What is a man profited, should he gain the world* (its honours, pleasures, profits) *and lose his soul? these will not avail in the day of wrath, and the day of death*

death will be such to every christless creature.

6thly, It should comfort us concerning the death of our particular friends, that living and dying, they had this *testimony of their consciences to be their rejoicing*. This was true of your late excellent pastor: he was an *old disciple*, had for many years found, that such who *walk uprightly, do walk surely*; and that the best way to be *filled with all joy*, was to keep a *good conscience*.

He gave a very early proof of the *simplicity*, and *sincerity*, which are so bright a part in the most finished characters; for instead of *looking at things seen, and temporal*, he acted counter to the dictates of *fleshly wisdom*, in his first laying out his scheme of life.

The case was this:

His father, designed this son, who was *the beginning of his excellency and strength*, for the profession of the LAW; accordingly he put him betimes under the care of Mr. *Singleton*, of *Clerkenwell Close*, a man of considerable figure for grammar learning. Having gone through with him, he was sent to *Oxford*, to prosecute the necessary studies there: but things not answering his expectation, the Tutor under whom he read being particularly disagreeable to him, he desired that he might be recalled, and was gratify'd

gratify'd in his request. Quickly after his return hither, the court revived the persecution against the poor dissenters.<sup>a</sup> Not being allowed to go where he *chose* for public worship, he must hear as he *could*; and attending upon the ministry of Mr. Smithys at *Cripple-gate* church, it pleased God so to set in with what he said, as to bring him under conviction, and give such a turn to his mind, that all his thoughts about the *law* vanished at once, and he resolved to devote himself to God in the work of the *gospel*, though *bonds and imprisonment* might attend it. His father observing an uncommon concern of spirit in his son, and being acquainted with the spring and reason of it, endeavoured by urging the *difficulties* to which the service he had chosen, must unavoidably expose him, to divert him from it. To all arguments of this kind, our friend reply'd, I foresee these discouragements, acknowledge that the advantage as to this world, does lie in the other scale, yet upon this view of the case, I like to be a *minister of Jesus Christ*; and if I may be successful to bring *one soul* to him, it will yield me more satisfaction than *thousands of gold and silver*. His father, though it disappointed his design, yielded to the force of this rea-

<sup>a</sup> This must have been about 1681 or 1682 when Dr. Stillingfleet's mischief of separation so provoked the Papal fury.

soning;

soning; undoubtedly with secret pleasure. His next care, was to dispose of his son in the best way, as one who had made *divinity* his favourite study: Providence directed him to make choice of Mr. *Charles Morton*, at *Newington-Green*: a person who had for a considerable course of time, taught university learning with applause. Our friend was admitted a member of this private academy before he had compleated the sixteenth year of his age. ° His chosen companions were the most solid and serious; such who had the best taste of learning, and the greatest emulation to excel: and as he came behind none of them in real *piety*, so among his contemporaries he had his share of reputation as a *scholar*. The troubles encreas'd; and such seminaries for education in our way, were look'd on with an evil eye: upon this, some young persons engaged in the same studies, and with the same view, propose *Geneva* as a place more favouring their designs: and the deccas'd, wisely judging such a publick academy to promise greater improvement, than could be had in this private school, obtained leave of his father, to make one among these generous adventurers. Here, they attended the lectures of the deservedly celebrated Dr. *Francis Turretine*. He had not been long at *Geneva*,

• March 27. 1683.

till

till God suffer'd him (the better to fit him for the work of the ministry, to which he had called him) to be exercised with great doubts, as to the state of his soul; his darkness and fears grew upon him, his spiritual troubles ran so high, that he seemed to be not many removes from despair: but the clouds scatter'd by degrees; God blessing the conversation of Mr. *Mc Crn*, providentially here at this time, to the restoring him to a solid settled peace of mind: to the last, the name of this man was dear to him.

Having spent some time at *Geneva*, he removed to the *United Netherlands*; and study'd at the University of *Utrecht*: here the *philosophy* professor was the famous *de Vries*, and *Witsius* the professor of *divinity*; men who shone among the first lights, in their more private characters as Christians, as well as in the faculties which they publicly professed. Under the disadvantage of ill health, he made a good proficiency in useful learning: and it has been remarked to his honour, by those who knew him abroad, that the *seriousness* of his spirit was beyond what is ordinarily seen in such a stage of life, and his ability in *prayer* as extraordinary.

Think of this with pleasure, and so as to have ever a grateful remembrance of your

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late pastor, he was not a *minister* before he was a *Christian*: he had experienced the power of religion upon his own heart, and having himself *believed*, was the fitter to *speak*. God had done his part, to make *him a scribe instructed for the kingdom of heaven*: and the good which he did afterward, is less to be wonder'd at, since *God was with him*.

Having gone through the necessary preparatory studies, he return'd home not to loiter, but to work: and so skilful an hand might soon find employment enough in this great city. He had not preach'd long, till his fame was so noised abroad, as a solid, judicious, edifying minister, that the congregation under the care of the learned Mr. *How*, gave him an invitation to be an helper to him in the work of the gospel: how he behaved in this station, there are some who pleasurably remember to this day. I have heard him speak, of the *undeserved* interest he had in the esteem both of pastor and people. His *merit* was truly great, yet such was his *modesty*.

In some time after this, the eyes of the church to whom good Mr. *Kentish* had minister'd, were upon him; they with one consent resolved to call him to the pastoral office among them, though not without fears as to the issue of the application: upon

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on their signifying their united desire to him, he determined so as he never could have done, had *fleshly wisdom* directed him. This church was small, sixteen or seventeen members, were the utmost of their strength; the auditory was in proportion: the encouragement therefore could not to this thinking man, be *great things*. He was then in a church of principal note, had an honourable and flourishing audience, was amidst a number of hearty generous friends; that to an eye of sense, it could not but appear, that he must be a loser did he fall in with the proposal. His father (who was join'd at Mr. *How's*) hearing what was offered, shew'd a strong disinclination to his embracing it; some of the first rank, and influence, in that church, make a kind of remonstrance: they engag'd to enlarge his income, tho' it was already above what he had any rational prospect of meeting with from the other: however, the case thus circumstanced, he accepted their call, and said, that there was so much of God's hand, in the unanimity and affection expressed by this people, that he would take his lot with them, and leave events to God.

How soon things put on a better face, is within reach of some of your memories. As his ministry met with acceptance from

his setting out, he had this to *strengthen his heart and hands*, that this did encrease daily. *He shone more and more*, and greater were their numbers who *rejoyced in this light*. The church so throve upon his settlement, (so *great was the harvest*) that the next thought was, where they might get room for the people who *offered themselves willingly*. God conducted them hither; to this spot on which we are now worshipping him: and that in so short a compass of time, there should be found so many, *able, and disposed, to build such an house as this to the name of the Lord*, shews how God did by him make way to the hearts of his people.

The case thus view'd in all its circumstances, seems to me to have been *a token for good*, that God intended to put much honour upon him: he certainly did, or you would not have the *name, or place* among the churches of Christ in *London*, which you deservedly have.

*What his doctrine, and manner of conversation among you have been* for more than thirty years, will not be easily forgotten: the tender care with which he *watched over you*; the *long-suffering*, with which he *reproved, and exhorted you*; the meekness, and patience in which he was *an example to the flock*; his fidelity, and diligence;

gence; many are the *testimonies* he had in your consciences, of his being a vessel of honour thus sanctify'd, unto the master's use. His name had a *sweet savour* in many of the churches of Christ, but the affection you shew'd to him as a spiritual father, was in an especial manner *his joy*.

From my first being occasionally where he was call'd to preach, I regarded him as one remarkably fitted to answer the most valuable ends of the ministry; I mean, to strike the consciences of men, to persuade them of the reality of religion, and make them serious, and in good earnest about the salvation of their souls: but since the providence of God, found out a way to bring me into a nearer relation with him, and you, I had more opportunities for knowing the temper of his mind, and his way of thinking in points of the greatest moment; and could not but conclude (had I no other evidence) that the *substance* of his sermons was the generally acknowledged necessary points of *faith*, and *practice*.

Since that time, I have often heard him with pleasure; and I believe, but few who attended him with unprejudiced minds, could say they went from his ministry unedify'd.

As his *matter* was solid, well digested, apt to attain the great end of preaching,

so



so it was far from losing any thing by the manner of his delivery. His thoughts were cloathed in a *plain* but *manly* dress; he avoided the extremes of an *uncouth rusticity*, and a *gawdy eloquence*; chose words most suitable to convey his ideas of the great things of God with a becoming force to the mind: and the *awe* he appeared to be under, as in the divine presence, was not a small beauty, or but little improving in his ministrations.

His *zeal*, and *steadiness* are well known. He would give up nothing which he judged to be a *truth*, either to make, or keep a friend; but the *higher* the place which that truth had in the scheme of his faith, the greater the influence which the belief of it had upon the *practice* of a Christian, the more *earnestly* did he contend for it. The doctrine of the *ever blessed Trinity*, in particular, the *true eternal Godhead of the SON, and SPIRIT*, he look'd upon as the *substratum* of Christianity: our hopes and happiness depending upon a practical belief of this doctrine.

He was the last of the four *London* ministers, who (before our unhappy differences, which have impaired our beauty, and *weakned our strength in the way*) published a pamphlet, intitl'd, *The doctrine of the Trinity*

*nity stated and defended*<sup>p</sup>. Some time after, he believed himself called to own this doctrine by *subscription*, he most freely *subscrib'd* it: continuing to the last, to preach the doctrine which he had thus owned, to maintain it against such as would draw men off, in this point, to *another gospel*: he died in the faith, he had lived in, and had pleasure in a review of his having (as he phrased it) *thus born his testimony*.

I cannot but remember, that when he had met with some difficulties, which he had no reason to expect, (not very long since) saw his way on a sudden hedged up, consulting with me, (such was his condescension) he said, " Help me, dear brother, " to see my way, I am at a loss to know " what is my duty, if I can but see my " *duty* plain, by the grace of God I will " get over every discouragement,

This was another instance of his *godly sincerity*: I may add of his *humility* too.

As to this part of his character, I can say with truth, I never yet knew that minister whom the *world* so highly valued, and yet thought so meanly of *himself*. His *sermons*, which shew'd him to be a *workman who needed not to be ashamed*, were poor things, in his account of them: and tho' he was  
mighty

mighty in *prayer*, yet he lived under a prevailing sense of his weakness in that particular duty. In a *will* which he made, since you were pleased to invite me among you, there are these words, which support this branch of his character, “ If Mr. *Wood* “ shall consent to preach a sermon on the “ occasion of my death, and shall think fit “ to say any thing of me therein, let it be “ no more than this; that the not being “ able to do more good, was the greatest “ burthen which attended me throughout “ my whole life; and the incomprehensible infinite mercy of God thro’ the Lord “ Jesus Christ is mine only refuge, my chief “ support under the prospect of death.

I was not thus *tied up when the time of his departure was at hand*; and have reason to think, that it was with an eye to God’s glory, and not to *the praise of men*, that I was released from this restraint.

It must be said of him that he was a *prudent*, as well as zealous, affectionate, faithful minister, one who knew *men*, and understood the *world*, as well as most men of his station in it: had it been otherwise, he could not have left us in so full reputation as he did; lived so *beloved*, or died so sincerely, and generally *lamented*.

His constitution had been breaking for some years; his constant *labours* among you, and

and elsewhere (for he was *Lecturer* in many of the most considerable pulpits, in or about *London*, and was *servent in spirit serving the Lord*) gradually wasted the lamp of life. I believe that the *unkindnesses* he met with from some who ought to have treated him with honour, did more than a little injury this way: tho' what was in your power to do, by the most undissembled expressions of steady friendship, he thankfully acknowledged he met with from you, to lighten his burthen. Add to these, his publick *cares*, his many *correspondences*, the frequent returns of acute *pain*: these greaten'd the load, and at length, nature *sunk* under it. The *earthly house*, whose *foundation was in the dust*, could no longer hold out against the storms and floods; but as to his better part, *his latter end* was preferable to *his beginning*.

He had the *desire of his heart* given him, in these two things, about which he was solicitous.

He had often begged of God, that he would not punish him, by suffering him to out-live his *usefulness*; you well know that his prayer was heard in this: for the last day of his appearing among you, it was remarked, that he had never been more lively, affectionate, enlarged, and edifying, than on that day at the Lord's table: as if

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his master had there given him the *king*,  
 that he was going *to drink the wine new* in  
 the kingdom of God.

The other of his desires, in which it  
 pleased God to gratify him, was, that he  
 might not by dying in the *dark* dishonour  
 Christ, or stumble his people: as to this,  
 he had what he ask'd. I have often been  
 called to attend on God's *people* in their  
 dying hours, have been more than once  
 with dying *ministers*, but remember not to  
 have seen more of God's special and graci-  
 ous presence, so much of *the light of his*  
*countenance lifted upon* any as your late  
 Pastor. He died in the possession of a clear  
 and strong judgment; one of his last acts,  
 was to pray for this church, *and bless you*  
*in the name of the Lord*: and how the  
*spirit of God help'd him under his infirmi-*  
*ties of body*, when he *had the sentence*  
*of death in himself*, you will be better able  
 to judge, by the following brief account  
 of his *last day's* conversation with his  
 friends.

To his now sorrowful *relict*, he said,  
 " My dear, had I power with God as *A-*  
 " *braham*, I would improve it to secure  
 " the best of blessings for you, for my  
 " children, and for the whole church of  
 " Christ. Let *my God*, be *yours*, be *faith-*  
 " *ful unto death*; it will not be long, till  
 " we

“ we meet where we shall never part, ne-  
 “ ver more be sad.” Quickly after he  
 said, “ O the joys I feel! my heavenly Fa-  
 “ ther is carrying me to heaven in his arms:  
 “ I am going thither *on a bed of roses*. I  
 “ feared this hour, lest my pains should  
 “ extort an impatient word, or cause that I  
 “ should *seem* to be uneasy under his hand;  
 “ I have often wished to die *praising God*,  
 “ how kind is he who gives me leave so  
 “ to do? Trust *my God*, he will not fail  
 “ those who *put their trust in him*. O the  
 “ comforts I feel! what blessed company  
 “ shall I be soon in? what a mercy to be  
 “ taken hence amidst my sympathizing  
 “ friends?

Having blessed particularly, the branches  
 of his family, he ordered one who was pre-  
 sent, to tell *you* as opportunity offered,  
 “ that your dying minister sent his love  
 “ and thanks to *you* for your kindnesses to  
 “ him: tell them (said he) that I send them  
 “ my dying blessing; and if I were in the  
 “ pulpit, and all my people about me, I  
 “ would as far as a minister of Jesus Christ  
 “ can do it, bless them in the name of my  
 “ great Lord.” When he was cautioned  
 against speaking too much, as what did sen-  
 sibly weaken him, in his low condition,  
 he reply’d, “ I have served my Lord *living*,  
 and I am now doing it *dying*. No cloud

fullied the face of these heavens to the last; *the end of this righteous man was peace, he finished his course with joy.*

*Tho' dead, he yet speaks to you; calls you to remember him, who for so many years had the rule of you, and spake to you the word of God, that you should follow his faith, his simplicity, and sincerity, considering the end of his conversation.* It is a loss to us, when any useful godly man is removed by death out of a world in which such are more needed every day; but when a minister is called hence, so well furnished, so uncommonly owned, and honoured of God, one so faithful, prudent, active, steady; when such strokes are repeated, and such to whom these characters are applicable, taken away (as it were) *in company*, sure I am that we should *lay this to heart.* May the shepherd of the sheep, who knows how to have compassion, pity you. May the Lord of the harvest from whom every faithful labourer has his commission, provide for you. *The residue of the spirit is with him.* Tho' ministers die, yet the head of the church lives for evermore: to him let your eyes be lifted up. Adore the hand that smites you, yet plead with God his name, his cause, his covenant: a praying people are in the way of their duty, and in the way of the blessing. You must die as well as your ministers; therefore

fore take heed whom, and what, as well as how you hear, if you would give up your accounts with joy.

But what shall I say to a disconsolate widow, and two fatherless children: the first, bereaved of a most useful minister, a Christian friend, a tender and affectionate husband? the latter, of a skilful faithful monitor, a dear indulgent parent? let the widow, and fatherless trust in God. May it alleviate your grief to think that one lov'd so well, is beyond all the inconveniencies of an imbodied state; let it raise your joy, to remember, that he is now glorified. Let his holy example excite a becoming emulation, that the same world may receive you, into which he is entered. May the Lord encrease your faith in this particular, that the many prayers which have been sent up to heaven for you, shall in the most proper way, and time, be answered.

I am sensible that I have been so long, as that some may judge me tedious. May he who only teaches to profit, make these impressions on the minds of all in this crouded assembly, that they who are strangers to God, may go away with an honourable opinion of a religious life, bent for earnest prayer to him, that by his grace he would guide them into the path of truth; that living the life of the righteous, their end  
may

may be like him; and that such who know  
 God's name, may follow him more fully; more  
 exemplify in a well ordered conversation the  
 power of real religion. If the case be thus,  
 the common edification will have been pro-  
 moted: neither I have spoken, nor you  
 have heard in vain.

husband, the father of a skilful faithful  
 mother, a dear industrious parent; let the  
 father and fatherly will in God. May  
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